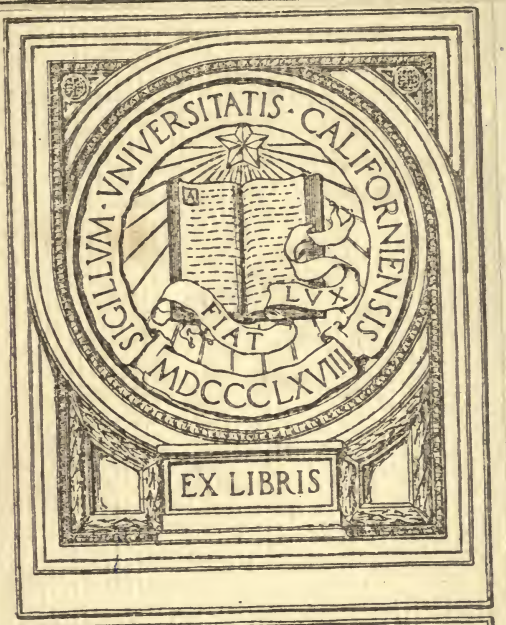
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COMPOSITION IN THE HIGH SCHOOL
THE FIRST AND SECOND YEARS

By
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Instructor in English
The University of Wisconsin

MADISON
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I

INTRODUCTION

This bulletin confesses to an extremely restricted and definite aim. It is designed to be of some service, however slight, to those teachers in the State of Wisconsin, who through lack of experience, or the pressure of too numerous duties, have felt the need of some specific suggestions as to the matter and the method to be used in conducting the work in English composition, during the first and second high school years.

What is said here applies particularly to the work in the smaller high schools, since it is in such schools that the instructors in English are laboring under the greatest difficulties. The suggestions given have been worked out in several classes, under the actual conditions that exist in the average high school; they are, therefore, the product, not of theorizing, but of an effort to make of first and second-year composition something both agreeable and profitable. If it appears that undue emphasis has been given to the idea of rendering the course agreeable, this condition has its origin in a firm belief that it is only by consulting the everyday interests of the pupils, and creating in the class the notion that self-expression is a natural and pleasant thing, that the best results can be obtained. While stress may, on occasion, be very properly laid on the ultimate advantages of composition for the practical purposes of life, it cannot be expected that these remote considerations will appeal to the average freshman or sophomore; the surer way of progress is to win the student's sympathy and interest in the work for its own sake.

II

CONDITIONS AND AIMS*

Most teachers of high school English will admit the existence of a close relation between the work of the first year and that of the second. Nevertheless, since the first-year course is in every sense fundamental, it demands perhaps the more extended

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consideration in any statement of conditions and aims. In all dealings with the freshman class in the high school, the teacher must remember that she is working, not with men and women, but with children. Failure to realize this most palpable truism is, it is safe to say, the cause of half the poor teaching that is done in the first high school year. The freshman boys and girls have taken only one step beyond the elementary school. They are, in mental development, as far removed from the seniors as the children passing from the fifth grade are from the freshmen themselves.

Moreover, the first-year pupils are undergoing the bewildering revolutions of adolescence, when all existence is coming to assume to them a new and perplexing aspect; and they have added to their general perturbation the confusion incident to the change from the methods of the grades. They must, one might almost say, begin everything anew, and adapt themselves to situations which hitherto they have known nothing about. Those slow in adjustment do not become thoroughly acclimated, in the high school, before the beginning of the second year.

While all these simple facts are usually well recognized by the teacher who has had some years of experience in high school work, they are by no means so apparent to the young woman just out of college, who, with no previous training in teaching, is making her first attempts at solving the problems of freshman composition. The inexperienced teacher expects too much. She tries to fit college methods to undeveloped high school minds. She takes too little account of the youthful interests of her class, and fails to make capital of their enthusiasms, their possibilities, and their incipient desires to make themselves count for something in the world—as they see it.

The freshman is, with rare and shining exceptions, an immature, unlettered being, not yet sufficiently repressed by frowning parents and exacting teachers to forget the merely animal joy of living. He has not reached the stage where the grasshopper becomes a burden, and a literary taste has been acquired. He is joyous, inexperienced, naively uncultivated and frankly crude. He is usually innocent of introspection. He feels no desire at all to pour forth his soul in letters; or, if by chance he does possess this yearning, his taste runs to highly-colored newspaper adjectives. Ordinarily, he would rather be

whittling a stick or climbing a tree than writing a composition. He is naturally, and fortunately, interested in activity, rather than in the pursuit of a chaste and polished prose style. Unity and coherence are as a sealed book to him, and even to the subject of capitals he has been known to exhibit a high indifference. He may have read a little (Kirk Munroe, chiefly, or Harry Castlemon), but his reading is still, as it were, purely physiological. The enjoyment of its stimulus and diversion is all there is in it for him. He has very few data for literary comparisons. He does not know how (nor will he for a long time yet) to make his reading a tool for any purpose whatever, least of all for the purpose of writing.

The teacher must take him, then, as he is, and make out of his very (seeming) defects the material for literary proficience. She must let him talk and write of the things which interest him in his own small but real world of activity. She must lead him to express himself on those phases of the larger world with which his adolescent curiosity is becoming concerned. She must supply him with good books in which, at first, action and movement predominate, and show him, little by little, how to make use of what he reads. She must, even in the midst of the irritation and despair that he may sometimes cause her, deal with him with tact and patience, as with one who has not yet found himself.

The freshman, be it said to his credit, is usually willing to do the task set before him, provided that it is not too much trouble, and that he has had some directions as to how to approach it It is not unusual for him to have vague aspirations, and he dimly conceives that a course in composition may be of some assistance to him in the future. Even if such is not the case, he regards his work with an unformulated philosophy centered in the acceptance of the inevitable. He will, as far as in him lies, do what is asked of him, if he is only shown how to begin. If he labors heroically, as he sometimes does, over distasteful tasks and meaningless rules and formulæ, he will strive still more vigorously to make a success of lessons which are founded on his natural interests and proclivities. No course in composition can afford to ignore those interests, and the most profitable course will be the one in which they are made the point of departure in all possible circumstances and situations.

The conditions being what they are, it would seem that the aims in freshman composition must be stated in somewhat modest terms; this, in a sense, is true. It is clear that the teacher must relinquish all, or the greater part, of her yearning for the neatly turned, the finished, the artistic. She must take at its face value the honest, unlovely work of the freshman hand, and accept it "with a patient shrug"—for sufferance is the badge of all her tribe. Nevertheless, she may have before her some very definite and very worthy aims, which will make her efforts, even in the most trying times, seem decidedly worth while.

The first aim we may designate as:

Power in Observation and in Reading

The first year composition work can do much to cultivate in the pupil an interest in people and things, as exemplified both in the world and in books. It ought to produce a desire and an ability to see what is in actual nature and its literary counterfeit. Drawing and literature are of invaluable assistance in this work. They teach observation and reading for a sense of values, and the subordination of details to larger facts. They give a grasp of the spirit of a thing, allowing detail to enter only as an especially significant touch. Many phases of science and nature study can be made to contribute to the content of both oral and written composition.

The teacher should try to develop, through all the means at hand, a power in the child to make his own what he sees and reads. The pupil should feel that he is going to be called upon constantly for the results of his contact with things, with people, and with books, and that he must keep himself in such an attitude as to be constantly gaining something from all three. Once an idea of this kind is established in the class, it may be developed to a degree somewhat surprising and almost satisfactory. The composition teacher, by requiring the pupil to express himself on what he has experienced and read, can produce in him an interest in seeing and reading, and the power to do both intelligently. When this object is attained, life assumes to the student a perceptibly different aspect; his mind is, if ever so little, broadened, and he has acquired something, not merely to talk or write about, but to weave into the lasting fabric of his thought.

Freedom of Expression

Freedom—spontaneity—in writing and in speech, is another legitimate aim. The pupils should disabuse themselves of the idea that talking and writing, in school, are laborious and impossible tasks. If they have entered the high school after a thorough course in oral and written composition in the grades, it will not be necessary to make the aim of freedom so prominent, though in any case it cannot be altogether dispensed with. Many high schools have, in the freshman class, pupils whose training in the grades has been far from ideal; and nearly all have a considerable percentage of students from the country schools, where the work in English must, for lack of time, receive somewhat less consideration than it deserves. Even if all the members of the class have had the ordinary elementary school training, they must now begin to work in a different way; not merely to reproduce stories, and describe experiments, but to talk and write from their own experience, reading, and imagination. They must find something of their own to say, and must say it independently and clearly. Freshmen usually need to be taught the dignity of their own thoughts. They have lost the simplicity of earlier years, and have not yet acquired the self-assurance that comes with later life. They are modestly certain that nothing that they have in their heads is worth telling the class or putting down on paper. Often, they are really delighted to find that their own adventures and opinions are considered valuable enough to be expressed carefully and well. They must be encouraged to draw freely upon themselves and the world about them for material, and to express their thoughts easily and without constraint. The attainment of this great end of freedom of expression ought, then, to be one of the chief aims of the teacher in the first high school year.

Definiteness and Accuracy of Expression

Vague, slipshod methods of expression are tolerated in so many classes that the English class ought to be a place where clean-cut accuracy is insisted upon. It is unfair to the students to allow them to recite in half-sentences and explosive combinations of words without grammatical relationship. They will at some time or other, deeply regret their inability to speak

correctly. It is unfair, also, to permit them, either in speaking or writing, to use statements of doubtful accuracy or clearness. No matter what course in life they are to follow, there is no accomplishment that will stand them in better stead than that of expressing themselves clearly and exactly.

Clear expression can result only from clear thinking. It is therefore essential that young people should be so trained that they may develop habits of logical thought and consistent reasoning. Even high school freshmen may be taught to think, as well as to speak and write, with some degree of precision and definiteness. Finding fault, and "nagging" about methods of expression will serve only to make the pupils self-conscious and irritable. Admonition, when neither frequent nor acrimonious, has its place; but better yet is the requiring of exercises that tend to bring about the desired result. Outlines, and composition-subjects which call for careful explanation given in logical order may be made instrumental in promoting good thinking and expression. If simple exposition of the narrative-explanatory type, and accurate, careful description are made a part of the work of the class, and carried on in a lively and interesting way, the fact will soon become apparent that accuracy of expression is a reasonable aim, and one which can be attained without undue demands upon the energies of teacher or pupils.

Grammatical and Rhetorical Correctness

The securing of some satisfactory degree of correctness in oral and written work is of vital importance in the first year as in all other years. It is certain, however, that the composition teaching which depends on the inculcation of a series of set rules, definitions, and theories defeats itself, and gains, in the end, little more than the glib rehearsal of the principles which it has labored to impress. If, on the other hand, the pupil has plenty to say, and says it freely and without self-consciousness, the chances are in favor of his working little by little (under guidance, of course) in the direction of mechanical and rhetorical correctness. But it is impossible in this day and age to await the slow results of the "ripening" process. Direct and vigorous effort must be made to eradicate the worst of the common errors in speech and writing. Too often, when pupils

enter the high school, their grammar is disheartening, their punctuation appalling, their spelling beyond comment. Paragraph-indentions figure only *in absentia;* sentence-structure defies analysis; whole compositions are horrible examples of what should under no circumstances be done. The situation is not exhilarating, but it must be met. Just in so far as is possible, without killing the interest and spontaneity of the class, the teacher should make a systematic business of weeding out mistakes. She will often be discouraged; the old errors will, in the manner of the undismayed "live-forever," crop out again and again. Yet she must not for a moment relax her vigilance. In the meantime, if she can assist the majority of her pupils to acquire a reasonably grammatical and orderly expression, combined with a simple diction, substantial and unaffected, she will be doing much. If at the end of the first high school year, the students can see and think more keenly and to better purpose; can talk and write more easily and accurately; and can express themselves with tolerable and increasing correctness, the teacher will not have labored in vain.

Although the work in the second year may be regarded as a continuation of that in the first, the conditions are not precisely the same. At the beginning of the second year, the pupils are more mature, better developed, physically and mentally, and more accustomed to high school methods and requirements than they were the year before. They have, in some measure, become adjusted. Since the situation is somewhat altered, the aims of the course must be slightly modified. Freedom of expression has, presumably, been to a great extent secured; some commendable habits in the way of intelligent reading and observing have also been acquired. While these two aims are by no means to be disregarded, they need not be made so prominent as they were in the previous year. A little more energy may be directed toward promoting clear and accurate thinking and expression; toward the further elimination of errors; and toward a better understanding of the rhetorical principles to be observed in the composing of sentences, paragraphs, and complete discourses. More may be expected of the students than in the first year; they may work more independently, and deal with more difficult situations.

On the whole, many of the same methods may be used in the second year that have been employed in the first, due allowance

being made for the changes in conditions. In the following pages, unless some statement to the contrary is made, what is said is meant to apply to the conduct of the composition work in both the first and the second years in the high school course.

III

ORAL COMPOSITION

The oral side of composition is one which has been much neglected, though its value is but little inferior to that of the written. Oral work offers many opportunities for development which written composition does not give. It counteracts in a measure the habit of scrappy, incomplete expression which is tolerated in other recitations. It demands close and concentrated activity on the part of the pupil which written work does not call for. It makes for fluency in speaking, and accuracy of explanation. Lastly, it gives the teacher an opportunity to oversee the habitual oral methods of the pupils, and correct glaring errors which do not come out in the more artificial process of writing.

The pupils will perhaps think that the requirement made upon them is a little exacting, but will soon become accustomed to the task of preparing for oral recitations. They should be made to stand out before the class, keeping an erect position and speaking clearly and intelligibly. They may speak either with or without notes. At first, if not at all times, they should be allowed to refresh their memories and derive moral support from a bit of paper containing an outline of their remarks.

The oral and the written work may usually go hand in hand; nevertheless, it is, in general, advisable to let the oral consideration of a subject precede the written. Working up a subject to be presented in spoken form is good preparation for any written theme. There will, however, be numerous occasions on which it will not be wise to require both the oral and the written treatment of the same subject. A hard and fast rule in such a matter is to be avoided. It is usually true that students will use a better vocabulary in written than in spoken work; therefore, in order to effect an easy transfer, it is sometimes allowable to require them to speak on subjects which

have already been treated in writing. This method should be used sparingly, and only in the case of themes that have had thorough preparation in class discussion before being written. If writing and speaking are made to assist and supplement each other, economy of time and energy will result, as well as readiness and confidence on the part of the pupils.

In accordance with the plan of the written work, the first oral work of the course will consist of short narratives and anecdotes. These will usually have their origin in the daily occurrences that come under the students' notice, either in school life, or the larger life of the town. Planning the preliminary sentences of explanation, the arrangement of details, the vivid and expressive words and phrases to be used, will be a piece of work which will have great value in showing the pupils how literary method, even in a small way, goes to produce happy effects. If this work is done in connection with the study of easy narrative in the literature lessons, and narrative, both with and without plot, in written composition, some admirable results may be secured in the understanding of the principles of approach, logical arrangement, and diction.

Oral description affords opportunities for the same kind of training, in perhaps a still more concise and accurate way. Narrative and description may be combined with good effect, in accounts of journeys, hunting or fishing trips, picnics, camping expeditions, and so on.

A further word may be said concerning the connection between oral composition and the reading of the English classics. Much material can be drawn from the literature lessons; the informal discussion of points of interest in the reading is as truly work in composition as the more formal oral discourses before the class, and should be regarded by the teacher as opportunities for quiet training toward good methods of expression, and correct habits of speech. Subjects suggested by such discussion may be assigned to individual pupils for more thorough discussion, in oral form, at the next recitation. Many other topics will be suggested in the course of the reading, as the imaginative continuation of an incident not completely detailed in the book; the brief analysis of character; the explanation of a difficult or disputed point; the defense of a line of conduct or a course of action. The skillful teacher will find many ways in which she can make the reading of the class fur-

nish material and inspiration for oral work, without resorting frequently to the mere process of retelling the story that has previously been read.

In the narrative-explanatory type of oral work great benefits are discernible. The pupil is required to face the rest of the class, and explain logically, clearly and completely, some idea, some article, or some process, concerning which he has informed himself. If the subject admits, he may illustrate by the article itself, or by drawings or diagrams which he makes upon the board. The boys will not consider it a hardship to deal with such topics as "How to set up a tent," "How to make a camp bed," "Breaking a colt," "Building a bird house." The girls will draw their material from other sources, and present subjects like the following: "How to make a bed," "Recipes for fudge," "How to make a leather card case." Manual training and domestic science will furnish ample material for such explanations. Christmas time gives an opportunity for the description of gifts and games. As it will be uninteresting for each person to describe the same thing, the pupils must select individual topics, having first had general suggestions from the teacher.

A profitable device to be used in connection with oral work is a general study of magazines and reference books. Obviously, this can best be done by recourse to the facilities of a city library, but this is not absolutely necessary. Each pupil is assigned, or is allowed to select, a magazine, presumably of some excellence, upon which he shall thoroughly inform the class, noting publishers, price, form, arrangement, material, illustrations, purpose, and other points which will suggest themselves. The relative uses and values of the current magazines can thus be naturally and forcibly brought out.

At another time, the various reference books accessible (dictionaries, atlases, periodical indexes, etc.) may be treated in the same way, each pupil reporting on one or more in a complete and definite way. It is better to assign particular books to specific members of the class, as individual abilities and tastes ought to be considered. Following this lesson, exercises may be assigned in which each pupil is required to use several of the reference books under discussion, so that the purposes and values of the books may be realized more concretely.

Reports on outside reading can be made a part of the regular

oral work. Once in two weeks half the members of the class may give reports on books selected from a list supplied by the teacher. It is essential that such discourses be brief, relating to the general matters of setting, plot, character study, and purpose of the book, rather than to minute incidents in the story.

Current events furnish good material for oral recitations. The topics selected should be of general interest, and all sensationalism should be rigidly excluded.

Under ordinary circumstances it will be impossible to have all the pupils speak formally during one recitation period. This difficulty is obviated by requiring written themes from half the class for the day on which the other half have prepared talks, reversing the assignment for the next occasion. Another plan is to have two or three persons recite every day, before the regular lesson is taken up. A posted list of individual assignments is necessary in such a case.

It is usually not advisable to interrupt a pupil who is speaking, unless he is failing to make himself understood. The listeners have a right to comprehend every step of the explanation, and to this end ought to be allowed to ask intelligent questions. A faultfinding or a frivolous spirit should, however, be summarily discouraged. Criticisms and comment are best disposed of at the end of the discourse. It is easy to let slips in grammar pass unobserved or uncorrected, and special care is required in guarding against carelessness in this respect. If the teacher unobtrusively notes on a bit of paper the errors of each pupil, she is less likely to let important mistakes go by without comment.

IV

THE SHORT THEME

Oral composition, no matter how excellent, cannot take the place of written work. The basis of the composition course must inevitably be the theme, and preferably the short theme, consisting of one paragraph, of from one hundred to two hundred words.

In the early part of the first year, the teacher's energies ought properly to be directed toward putting the pupils into the

right mental attitude with regard to the study, and giving them the desirable outlook upon the course. Freshmen are likely to be puzzled and bewildered if left to choose their own theme-subjects; accordingly, for some weeks, the teacher should suggest the topics, choosing them with a view to interest, and accessibility of material. Brief narrations of events that come under the notice of the class, and descriptions of familiar scenes or buildings lend themselves readily to the first literary attempts of the freshmen. During the recitation periods, the subjects may be talked over between teacher and pupils, outlines made, and even words and phrases indicated. The pupils must know exactly what is required of them, and must gain a general idea of the method of going at a piece of work. Confusion and discouragement at this time will seriously impede the progress of the class throughout the year. Careful planning of themes with the boys and girls during the first two or three weeks of the term will result in much more willing and intelligent work than could otherwise be secured. Gradually, the amount of the teacher's assistance should be reduced. Subjects should be suggested (not insisted upon) until the students have acquired an ability to find in their own remembered experiences and in their immediate environment the stuff of which good freshman themes are made. In the second year, the same methods may be employed, with judicious allowance for the power which has been developed in the previous year's training.

Narration is perhaps the most natural form of discourse, and the one most suited to the interests and capacities of young people. It ought, therefore, to serve as an introduction to the course in composition in both the first and the second years. Oral narration, dealing with material at hand, in literature lessons, or in every-day events, has already been mentioned. The transition from the spoken to the written theme is easily effected. Briefly related incidents and anecdotes will furnish opportunity for dealing with some of the most vital principles of composition. There need be no lack of material, since it can be constantly supplied through the agencies of reading, observation, memory, and imagination. Almost any girl, looking out of a window at home, or any boy, loitering up the street on an errand, will note some incident that will furnish forth the body and sinews of a theme. "An Accident on the Street," "Trading Horses,"

"Starting on a Journey," "The Class Strawride," are possibilities in the way of subjects. Most young people will have in mind a fund of simple anecdotes of childhood or more recent years, which can be indefinitely worked over for literary purposes if the proper appreciation is assured. "The Day we Moved," "How I took Care of the Baby," "A Narrow Escape." "Afraid of the Dark." are topics which suggest the type to be used. Sometimes a story told by a child's parents, of pioneer days, or life in a foreign land, will serve as a foundation for a diverting narrative. Pure imagination may also play its part in providing substance for short oral and written themes.

As has elsewhere been indicated, the oral treatment of a subject should usually precede the written. In preparing the class for the writing of a short narrative theme, the teacher should require a statement of the order of events, which, in most cases, will be simply a time-order. This can be put upon the board in the form of a brief outline. In the course of this preparation, important points for consideration will probably be brought out—as point of view, relevancy of details, value of direct quotation, and the like. If these do not naturally come out in the preliminary discussion, they are sure to do so when the completed themes are read aloud in the class. After the pupils have made a few trials of their skill, they will appreciate any short, well written incidents which may be read to them, or pointed out in the literature lessons. The miscellaneous columns of *The Youth's Companion* furnish good examples of brief, carefully-expressed anecdotes. The prose classics which the pupils are reading, such as Warner's *A-Hunting of the Deer*, or Irving's *Sketch Book* or Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales* will reveal a considerable number of passages which can be made the material for a direct study of narrative method. The ordinary pupil, having several times attempted to tell a story effectively, will be interested to see how someone else, of recognized ability, has handled the same problem. He will profit by the study of a model (if that study is skillfully directed by an enthusiastic teacher), and will return to his own task of story-telling, with greater willingness and insight.

A considerable amount of narrative work can be done in both the first and second years, without loss of interest. After some weeks, however, it will be well to pass on to the subject of description, planning for a return to narration when

the proper time arrives. Subjects for descriptive themes are always plentiful, and worthy of consideration. Landscapes, buildings, rooms, manufactured articles, plants, animals, and people are to be encountered willy-nilly, and no pupil is so poor in opportunity that he has not a treasury of descriptive material ready at any moment to be drawn upon. After the work that has already been done in narration, the pupils will make an intelligent approach to description. The outline, or statement of a logical order, will now be the accepted thing, as an idea of method in composing a piece of work has already been developed. When, through their efforts to describe familiar scenes and objects, the pupils have become conscious of their abilities and weaknesses, they will lend a ready attention to the "literary parallels" which the teacher puts before them. These may be taken from the classics in the hands of the pupils, from the composition text-book, or from other matter, suitable in subject and style. The students will not fail to see how much their own productions are lacking in logical arrangement and vividness, and, almost without exception, will feel an aspiration to improve. Some most suitable passages can easily be selected from the classics commonly studied in the first and second high school years; as Irving's *Sketch Book*, Burroughs' *Birds and Bees*, Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*, and *House of Seven Gables*, Thoreau's *Succession of Forest Trees*, and Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. The teacher should not fail to make use of the material nearest at hand, and that which is readily accessible to the students.*

Frequently, however, a particularly pleasing and well-constructed passage may be chosen from books other than those which the pupils are required to use in their regular literature work. A book which will give successful results is Charles G. D. Roberts' *The Heart of an Ancient Wood*. Read aloud the opening chapter, containing the journey of the woodsman through the forest, and his approach to the old cabin in the clearing. Ask the class (now certain to be actively interested) to write a description of the building. The next day, when the themes are read in class, read aloud the description in the book, and compare it with what the pupils have done. The matters of preservation of point of view, selection of details, use of sentence-

* See Short-Theme Subjects (p. 51) for such parallels.

forms, and choice of words, will have immensely more significance than these points could possibly have if treated merely in a lecture or even in a class discussion. It is quite likely that the description of the interior of the cabin, handled in the same way as that of the exterior, will show a decided advance in thought and method. The students will, at least, be interested and stimulated.

Actual imitation of a method of description may not inappropriately be attempted, but the passage selected must be short, simple, and characterized by distinctive qualities which the freshman mind can grasp—such as definite order of arrangement, straightforward, uninvolved sentence-forms, and striking, picturesque use of words. Some of the briefer descriptive passages in *The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains*, by Mary N. Murfree, might be selected for imitation; or paragraphs from Mary E. Wilkins-Freeman's *A New England Nun and Other Stories*, Octave Thanet's *Stories of a Western Town*, or Sarah O. Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs*, or Hamlin Garland's *Main Traveled Roads*.

Although the amount of the teacher's guidance and assistance will be gradually reduced as the work in any form of discourse proceeds, it will, at intervals throughout both years, be profitable to plan a theme with the class very definitely and clearly, considering the aim, the structure, the expression, even some of the exact words to be used. Such coöperation tends to develop a practical idea of working out a theme in order to give it point and lucidity.

An admirable subject for this coöperative treatment in description is "The Garden after a Frost." At an appropriate time in October or early November, announce the subject to the pupils, and tell them to look about for impressions. They may observe either a flower- or a vegetable-garden, or a combination of both. In a few days, plan the theme during class time. Show that the point of view can be indicated in such simple expressions as, "Passing by my neighbor's garden," "When I looked out of the window," or, "On the morning after the first heavy frost, I hurried out to see my garden." Bring out the fact that unexpected shifts of point of view are confusing and irritating to the reader. Take up next the order of description, showing the desirability of introducing a few sentences which give a general impression, or, as the rhetorics have it, a

"fundamental image." Then consider the choice of details, upon which the value of the description will largely depend. Last, give careful attention to the words which are likely to be truthful and effective in the proposed "written picture." Make a list of these words upon the board, as the members of the class suggest them. Seek for color words, and those significant of the ravages of the frost; such as "crimson," "gorgeous," "withered," "drooping," "flabby," "clammy," "leafless." Let the pupils copy the words that are new or especially striking, and see that each one takes with him from class a brief outline, or a list of the particulars above enumerated: Point of view, fundamental image, details, choice of specific words. The student will be dull indeed who does not write his theme with pleasure, and an increased degree of insight and skill. From time to time, other subjects may be developed in the same way, though perhaps with less minute direction and discussion. "Main Street on a Stormy Day," or "The Garden in Early Spring," are subjects which might be chosen at the suitable time of the year.

Descriptions of people are always interesting and enlivening. Pupils will readily apply themselves to the task of portraying in words the forms and faces of the people they know. It is unnecessary to give the titles of books containing suitable material for illustration of principles in this work, as almost any good novel will do. Descriptions of groups of people may be required in such subjects as the following: "Around the Sitting-room Table;" "A Game of Marbles;" "Boys Playing Ball;" "A Girls' Sewing Club."

The mingling of narration and description will naturally suggest itself while these forms of discourse are being studied. In fact, it will be impossible to read very far into any of the classics which the students are using, without discovering instances of a skillful combination of narrative and descriptive elements. The students will enjoy doing a number of pieces of work, both short and long, in which such a combination is attempted.

Narrative-explanation, a type of easy exposition, has already been spoken of, under the head of oral composition. As a written exercise, it is exceedingly important, since it affords admirable opportunities for the development of a clear and clean-cut style. Even in the freshman year, there is an unlimited amount of material which may be drawn upon for explanatory themes.

Brief, simple, straightforward explanations of ordinary subjects in which boys and girls are interested will be at once natural and profitable. In connection with, or independently of, the oral training, accounts may be given of the processes involved in performing a certain action or making a certain article. "How to Make Ice Cream," "How to Play Shinney," "A Good Way to Make a Kite," "Planting and Caring for a Strawberry Bed," are suitable topics.

As pupils will, of course, prefer subjects upon which they have some personal knowledge, they should be allowed all latitude in their choice. The value of accurate, uninvolved statement may be illustrated by the writing of directions for reaching a particular place. Topics pertaining to school matters are always available; e. g., "Why we Should (or Should Not) Have a School Paper;" "Why I am (or am not) Studying Latin;" "The Qualities of a Good Basket-Ball Player." Such topics, which call for a certain amount of analytic thought, are more suited to the second than to the first year. Subjects may, once in a while, be taken from the pupils' other lessons: manual training, physical geography, or history. Sometimes, during the second-year composition course, the teacher may read from a magazine a short account of some process or situation, and the pupils may reproduce it in an explanatory way, as if to make it clear to some one who is puzzled by it. Another exercise is the elucidation of common proverbs, such as, "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," "A carpenter is known by his chips," "Fast bind, fast find," "A new broom sweeps clean."

Under the direction of a skillful and enthusiastic teacher, a most educative piece of work in either year, but especially in the second, would be the preparation of a series of themes giving the results of observation in nature study. The spring is the best time for this, not only because the outdoor world is at that season most alluring, but because the students have had the benefit of six or seven consecutive months of instruction in composition. The development and distinguishing characteristics of flowers, and the appearance and habits of birds and animals, might be described. Every pupil could find some phase of nature to interest him. If the coöperation of the teachers of botany, zoölogy, and drawing could be secured, some really worthy and satisfactory results might be attained, as well in accuracy of statement as in excellence of expression. The stu-

dents might, in conjunction, compile, illustrate, and edit a slender volume in longhand or typewriting, comprising the results of their labors. This latter task, however, should not be undertaken if it cannot be done readily and willingly, or if it cannot be accomplished without an undue consumption of the time of the class. For the work just suggested, Gilbert White's *Natural History of Selborne* is an excellent model. Other useful books are: Gibson's *Sharp Eyes*, and *Eye Spy;* Sharp's *Wild Life Near Home;* Mowbray's *A Journey to Nature;* Thompson's *My Winter Garden;* Jefferies' *Field and Hedgerow;* Higginson's *Out Door Studies;* and the well known volumes of Burroughs and Thoreau.

V

THE LONG THEME

In the freshman year, the first long composition (300 to 500 words) should be "worked up" very completely, under the direction of the teacher. It will, of course, be in the nature of a narrative, since the short themes written during the first few weeks naturally take that form. Narration without plot, as the relating of the incidents of a trip, or an expedition of some sort, can be easily handled. Transition from the short to the long theme can be made by means of a series of three or four short accounts of the steps in a sucession of events, these accounts being written separately, and then welded together, to make a continous long theme. The frame-work prepared for each division can be readily combined into a longer outline with successive points indicated, the completed outline serving as a guide in the welding process. This method of transition can also be used in the second year, though perhaps it is not so necessary as in the first.

Stories of three or four hundred words, with a climax or *dénouement* (in other words, with a simple but real plot element), can be handled in the latter half of the freshman year; they will afford a pleasant return to narrative method after the consideration of description, letter writing, etc. Special occassions, like Saint Valentine's Day or Memorial Day are likely to furnish some inspiration for stories. It is sometimes stimulating to the pupils' imagination to tell to them, as vividly as

possible, the first part of a tale, letting them write it out, later, in complete form, with a *dénouement* added, of their own devising. An object that can be seen and handled may prove suggestive. In a certain class, an old brass candlestick, with a peculiar dent in the base, supplied the *motif* for a set of narrative themes, each pupil giving his own version of the accident which had marred the smoothness of the metal. The romanticist and the realist both had full liberty to express themselves; colonists, Indians and plain, common folk figured variously in the resulting narratives. Any quaint, unusual object could be made to serve the same literary purpose as that served by the candlestick; an old weapon, a miniature or a silhouette, a garment long out of fashion, a piece of antique furniture. The best results in narration can often be obtained, when the imagination of the students has been aroused by some strong stimulus, furnished by a special occasion, a half-told story, or an object which has within itself an element of interest and suggestiveness.

The second year's work may contain, both in the early and the latter half of the year, narrative exercises of the type just indicated.

The long descriptive theme, *per se*, is almost an impossibility, as a thread of narrative is almost essential for clearness and interest in a descriptive discourse of any length. In the second semester of the first year, and at almost any time in the second year, the combination of narration and description in long themes will be an acceptable task. Burroughs' observations of nature may be used as parallels; or Thoreau's relation of his outdoor experiences, in his *Excursions*, *In the Maine Woods*, and *Walden;* or Stevenson's *Across the Plains*, and *Silverado Squatters.*

It does not seem wise to attempt in the first year, any long expositions, even of the simpler explanatory type; but in the middle, or the latter half, of the second year, informal essays (400 to 600 words) on suitable topics may be attempted. It would seem advisable, in the case of the first theme of this sort, to have all the pupils write on the same subject, as the material must be carefully worked over in class, under the directions of the teacher. The subject chosen must be one which all the pupils can handle, and upon which all may find material. The industries of the town or of the vicinity may be investigated; or bits of local history may be collected and put into

form. Historical or biographical subjects are permissible, if there is a starting point of interest in the pupils' minds. This interest may reasonably be furnished by the literature lessons; for instance, if the class has recently studied *The Merchant of Venice*, or *Twelfth Night*, a suitable topic for the long theme work would be "Manners and Customs in England in Shakespeare's Time," or simply, "Shakespeare's England;" if the boys and girls are reading *The Deserted Village*, or *The Vicar of Wakefield*, they may enjoy writing a long theme on the life of Goldsmith; if they have read the *Sketch Book* they may find a life of Irving not entirely lacking in interest; or they may take still more kindly to "The Dutch in New York." On the whole, subjects which are related to the actual life and experience of the students are more valuable than those which are purely historical or literary.

A great deal of material must perforce be put before the class by the teacher during recitation periods. The rest may be secured by the pupils themselves from books or other sources. In the use of books for this work, it is absolutely necessary that exact and accurate reference be given to avoid confusion and waste of time on the part of the class. The outline is planned in recitation, completed outside, handed in, corrected, and returned. Some reading and discussion follow the making of the outline, in order that the entire substance of the theme be definitely comprehended. The writing is done consecutively if possible, and within a few days only, since the best results are obtained by writing at high pressure after thorough preparation.

Paragraph divisions, and transitions from one paragraph to another should be carefully looked to, both at the time of the final consideration of the outline, and at that of the writing of the theme.

The long theme of this sort may or may not be rewritten after it has been examined by the teacher. It is probable that parts of it, at least, will need reconstruction, revision, and copying; but it must not be forgotten that the theme when once completed has served its greatest purpose,—that of teaching the organization of material. Minor errors are of less importance here than in the short theme of a more original nature. The teacher should take especial pains in this work to insist upon the pupils' giving credit to the sources from which they take their infor-

mation. Copying passages without due reference to authors should never be allowed; a clear distinction should be made between the honest and the dishonest use of books and magazines for the purpose of supplying material for essays.

It will not be wise to attempt another long essay immediately, because this sort of labor is something of a strain upon the energies and patience of the pupils; but after a reasonable length of time has elapsed, the process above described may be repeated, with some variation in favor of individual effort. Each student selects his own subject, either from a list furnished by the teacher, or from some phase of his school work in which he is interested. All subjects must be approved by the teacher. Reference books are searched; the pupils are encouraged to find and read material for themselves. Outlines are carefully made by the pupils, and criticised (preferably in personal conferences) by the teacher. The completed outline is handed in with the finished theme. In these exercises, the pupils learn, in an elementary way, something of the method of attacking and handling a longer piece of written work. They gain a real, if somewhat crude, conception of logical arrangement and rhetorical effect, and make some progress toward an ability to put a long series of ideas into tangible and pleasing shape.

VI

LETTER-WRITING

After a month or two of oral work, themes, and text-book study, a place may be found in the first year, for a course in letter-writing. By this time the pupils have acquired some freedom in expressing themselves, and have, presumably, begun to realize the necessity of care and neatness in execution. If they have a yearning for the practical, they will easily see that all that they have been doing is a good preparation for making them their own "complete letter writers." Simple business letters, such as they have probably written in the grades, constitute a good beginning; but much more should be required. There is scarcely another line of school work which relates more closely to actual life or for which the students will be more grateful if they are properly trained. Impossible, far-

fetched situations have little place in this work. Concrete, everyday circumstances which the pupils are likely to meet within a few years may most profitably be used. Friendly letters of an unpretentious type should be written frequently in the freshman year. Social correspondence should be given due consideration, and the so-called formal and informal notes clearly distinguished. The simple details should be mastered, such as the application of degrees of effusiveness in salutation and complimentary close, the signing of one's own name, the use of titles in addressing others—in short, the small etiquette of careful correspondence.

In the second year, the work should be, in the main, similar to that in the first, but, little by little, more difficult problems may be presented. The text-book material on the subject of letter-writing is usually good as far as it goes, but it needs to be supplemented in both years by some rather varied practice. Below are given a few suggestions, which in all cases will need the addition of specific instructions, when assigned to a class. It will depend upon the abilities of the pupils, as to whether these exercises may be used more profitably in the first or the second year. Selection may be made according to the amount of training which the students have had.

You have just arrived at home after a visit in the family of a friend; write an appropriate letter to your hostess. (Many pupils will be surprised to learn that a "bread and butter" letter is demanded after a visit.)

You are sending a gift to a friend: Write a suitable note to accompany it.

You have received a gift: Write a letter of thanks.

A friend of yours in another town has just won some honor or distinction (taken a prize for declamation, secured first place in a contest, broken a record in athletics, received an appointment to the Naval School at Annapolis): Write a letter of congratulation.

The dramatic club to which you belong is to give a private performance of *The Merchant of Venice*: Write a note inviting a friend of your mother's.

Write the answer to the same.

Write to some man of local prominence, asking him to address the school upon a certain date. Give him all necessary information.

Write his reply.

Suppose that you are secretary of the Helping Hand Society: Write a letter asking for a contribution for charitable purposes.

Last summer you worked for some one who has never paid you what you earned: Write a letter asking for the money.

Write a reply to such a letter.

You are seeking a place to work: Write to the principal of the high school, asking him for a recommendation.

Suppose that the principal has written the recommendation, as you requested: Write a note of thanks.

Write a careful and definite letter of application.

You wish to enter a certain training school: Write to the superintendent (or director) of the school for specific information with regard to entrance credits, fees, catalogues, etc.

You are secretary of a literary society: Write a letter of resignation.

Beside the public road near your home there is a pool of stagnant water: Write to the Board of Health concerning it.

Write to the Congressman for your district, asking for material to be used in preparing for a debate.

A pet animal belonging to you has done some damage to the property of a neighbor who is out of the city: Write a suitable note to the neighbor.

A friend of yours has moved to a distant town: Write a note asking another friend, already living in that town, to call upon the stranger.

Write a reply to your letter.

Some months ago, you subscribed for a magazine but have not yet received a copy: Write to the publishers.

Your grandfather, living at some distance, is celebrating his seventieth birthday: Write him a note of congratulation.

Letters of the kinds indicated above will give a good opportunity for fine distinctions not usually brought out by the exercises in an ordinary text-book.

A high standard of excellence should be set in this work. The pupils must understand that a letter is either fit to be sent or it is not. There is no halfway point. It is, moreover, insulting to a correspondent to send him a careless, badly constructed letter. Nothing but absolute correctness in so far as it is attainable, should be tolerated.

Almost any work may be put into letter form for the sake of variety and interest. Very commonplace affairs acquire a new flavor if written for the benefit of an imaginary foreign acquaintance; for example, Mademoiselle Marie Beaumont, or Monsieur Pierre Philippe Beaumont, living at 45 Rue St. Jean, Paris, France.

Literary parallels can be made helpful in a course in letter-writing. It is not difficult to find letters from eminent persons, which may be read aloud to the class. Miss Alcott's, in the *Life and Letters*, by Mrs. Cheney, are sprightly and interesting examples for this purpose, and the letters of Robert Louis Stevenson afford ample material for selection. Miss Charity Dye's little book, *Letters and Letter-writing*, contains a collection of letters likely to be of interest to high-school students. *The Gentlest Art*, by E. V. Lucas, is a new book of some value.

Since much of the work of letter-writing is somewhat mechanical and exacting, it should not be kept up for many days at a time without some variation. A week of concentrated labor will accomplish much; so will a day of relaxation, when concentration begins to tell. This is true of any study. Hard, driving work, quite up to the pupil's ability, neatly and accurately done, for a succession of days, shows a distinct gain in power. An interim, during which the pupil lets his newly acquired knowledge assimilate, and gets his second breath, will help to avoid a loss of power in the next stretch of work. The relaxation days between periods of letter-writing may be occupied with oral composition, reading and discussing of earlier themes, learning of selections of poetry or prose, or the reading of some good, well-written short story, for pure enjoyment and breadth of view.

VII

CLASS EXERCISES

Class work will, of course, consist largely of getting ready for the written theme to be handed in at the next recitation; of the discussion of themes, and the correction of general errors, of oral recitatons; and of the consideration of the exercises in the text-book.

Impromptu written work is valuable when preceded by suffici-

ent preparation. Merely to say to a pupil on his coming to class, "Write a theme on any subject," is to bewilder and irritate him inexcusably, and to give him good reason for saying that he "hates composition." In the early part of the course, impromptu exercises should, after the manner of most extemporaneous discourses, be carefully worked up. The preparation may be made either on the day before the writing is to be done, or on the same day, during the first half of the recitation period. A subject of general interest is selected, and presented to the class; it is then discussed and outlined, with additions and suggestions from the teacher. Then a reasonable but limited amount of time is set apart for the writing, which is, of course, done in class. If some of the students work at the board, the opportunity for intelligent discussion of the completed theme is increased.

Somewhat later in the course, a general suggestion for an impromptu is given: as, "At the next recitation be prepared to write on the subject, 'The Noon Hour'". The pupils themselves will see the various ways in which the topic may be treated—as a description of country school children, working men at their dinner pail lunch, or city people hurrying to homes or restaurants. A little suggestion as to what to look for in observing for the theme, and what order to follow in writing, will usually result in interesting and individual descriptions. Many subjects of as wide application as the one above given will readily come to the teacher's mind in planning an "impromptu": "Sunday Morning", "Children's Games", "Examination Day", are typical.

The "incomplete story" may be made use of for a class exercise. A short, interesting tale is read, up to the point of the climax, or solution; then the students, after a brief discussion, are asked to put into written form their ideas as to "how the story comes out." Discussions on subjects suggested by the literature lessons may often be turned to account, and made the inspiration of excellent impromptu themes.

Subjects chosen from other lessons may occasionally be assigned as impromptus, or topics upon which the pupils have previously prepared oral themes. Sometimes three or four suitable subjects may be put upon the board, and the pupils allowed to choose from these. The psychological effect of this plan is better than that of presenting one subject, without

preparation, and demanding that all shall write upon it. Pupils like to feel that they are acting from choice rather than compulsion, and this very legitimate idea should be reckoned with whenever possible. Only after the students are used to looking about for subjects, and accustomed to the notion that they can really express themselves in writing, should the mere unembellished direction to write a theme be given. This exercise, assigned during the latter half of the year, has a decided value in making for concentration of thought and ready organization of material.

The following is a class exercise which serves the double purpose of cultivating the imagination and developing picturesque expression. Put a few striking and suggestive words upon the board, and require the pupils to write a sentence or two describing the image brought into consciousness, using, presumably, the given words themselves. For instance, the words may be "purple," "tangled," "morning;" or, "willows," "transparent," "calmly." A variety of quite original and often very effective vignettes will be the result. The young people will vie with one another in the attempt to produce vivid and forceful little sketches, and will be likely to use in other descriptive work the visualizing power gained in this exercise.

Not so interesting, but fully as useful in an entirely different way, is the condensation of one or two paragraphs into a few well-worded sentences. Care must be taken that the selection put before the class is suitable in length and clearness. In writing, a mere outline is not sufficient; a condensed statement of the main ideas of the selection should be insisted upon. This work can be done, in the first year, in only a very elementary form, but later it can be carried on more thoroughly.

Reproduction of literary material is seldom of great value, unless some orginal element can be added to it. Nevertheless, for variety's sake, it may once in a while be made use of for a class exercise. A poem, not too long nor too meditative, may sometimes be read to the class for reproduction in prose. Indirect quotation may be made direct. Anecdotes with definite and interesting point to them, if read aloud by the teacher and rewritten by the pupils, will aid in developing the idea of working toward a climax. Short expositions taken from magazine articles afford material for practice in explanation, and can be used occasionally in the second year.

Pictures may occasionally form the basis of class work; but the resulting oral or written themes should be not so much a mere description of the picture as a development of the ideas suggested by it. For example: If the class has been reading the prose translation of the *Iliad* (that by Church can be obtained in abbreviated form at a trifling cost), Alma-Tadema's picture, *A Reading from Homer*, will prove interesting and suggestive in the composition class. The describing of the picture is a good piece of work; but a better one is the writing of an imaginative sketch dealing with the circumstances of this particular "reading," the passage which is under discussion among the figures in the picture, and the conversation which is going on. The latter exercise is the more difficult, but on that very account—because it requires more of the pupil, without asking anything unreasonable—it has the greater educative value.

While none but good pictures should be employed for this work, not all of even the best are suitable, since many do not produce a sufficiently active stimulus to incite young people to interested expression, and others have too intellectual or spiritual a message for boys and girls to grasp or give words to. Boughton's *Pilgrims Going to Church*, and *The Departure of the Mayflower*, can be used with good effect, as may also Dagnan-Bouveret's *The Conscripts*, Landseer's *Shoeing a Horse*, Burne-Jones' *Circe* (in connection with the *Odyssey*), Ridgway Knight's *At the Ferry*, and numberless others which any intelligent teacher can adapt to the interests of the class.

There are many devices which must be made use of in class for the inculcation of correct grammatical and rhetorical forms. Many of these can be taken from the text-book. Filling in blanks with such trying and difficult words as "lie," "lay," "sit," set," and the like, is a somewhat dull but extremely useful piece of work; the same may be said of the writing of sentences containing the correct form of expressions frequently misused. If the class, as a whole, is addicted to the use of bad grammar, the mere repetition *ad nauseam* of proper forms such as, "I could have *gone*," "I *did* the work," "He *has done* the work," "I *saw* the man," will have a salutary effect, through the simple process of making the correct expression seem familiar and usable.

All class work ought to be carried on in a vigorous and animated fashion. There should be no idle moments for dawdling

or mischief. Everyone should be kept so busy and active, and so closely concentrated in what is going on, that he has no opportunity to pity himself for working so hard, and no time to reflect, as he might otherwise be moved to do, that he "hates composition."

VIII

CORRECTION AND REVISION OF THEMES

The ideal way of correcting a theme is to go over it with its author, pointing out to him each mistake, and suggesting ways in which form or structure may be improved. This method is, obviously, impracticable. The next best thing is to have as much personal consultation as may be, leaving the greater amount of correction to be done by means of correction marks, general criticisms, and written comments on themes. It is possible to provide for personal conferences without making an unreasonable tax upon the teacher's time. Occasionally, while the class is writing, pupils needing individual instruction may be called to the desk and quietly given assistance. It will sometimes pay to omit the regular recitation, and spend the time with a few, going through the whole series of their compositions and pointing out the most deeply rooted errors, as well as the greatest possibilities for improvement. A part of a vacant period, or ten minutes before or after school, may be taken for consultation with a group of pupils whose work is of about the same quality, demanding the same criticisms and suggestions. A little ingenuity in arranging for personal help will find its reward in the greater excellence of the written work, and the smaller number of mistakes to be corrected.

Valuable opportunities are sometimes lost by the teacher's failure to return themes at once. When they are kept for a week or more, the interest in them has somewhat faded, and the psychological time for fixing a corrected form has irrevocably passed away. Even at the cost of a considerable amount of concentrated labor and its attendant weariness, the teacher should strive to return every group of themes before it becomes stale.

In making a written comment upon a theme, it is well to remember that criticism need not always be complaint and fault-

finding. Judicious praise will often accomplish what persistent condemnation fails to do. An especially happy bit of phrasing, a particularly strong arrangement, or a marked improvement in any phase of work, should never pass unnoted nor uncommended. A grade, either in letters or in figures, according to the established system of the school, should be placed upon each pupil's theme. Children, as well as grown people, like to know how their work is estimated—what valuation is put upon it. There is no good reason for disregarding this very human trait. Giving a "standing," while it may not prove an incentive, is likely to have a good effect, in showing each pupil what worth his handiwork has in the teacher's eyes.

Themes should, of course, be corrected with red ink; even so, it is sometimes difficult enough to make the children see their mistakes. The class should be encouraged to inquire the meaning of criticisms; when papers are handed back, a few moments may be taken for questions and explanations. It is imperative that corrections should be made by means of conventional signs on the margin of the paper, and not by interlineations of better forms. If the latter method is employed, the student, in revising his theme, has nothing to do but to copy thoughtlessly what the teacher has laboriously rewritten for him; if the former, he must see his error and make it right before he proceeds. The teacher has need of some vigilance lest the pupils, instead of correcting mistakes, simply evade them by ingenious changes of construction or diction, in the second draught of the theme.

A regular practice should be made of correcting minutely every piece of writing handed in. Where there are certain errors running through a whole set of themes, these mistakes may sometimes be reserved for general correction before the class, with exercises for fixing the right form. The pupils can then, in a few moments, correct their own or one another's work, the teacher passing about the class and noting what is done. The next assignment may be one which demands further use of the proper expressions which have been shown to be superior to the forms under discussion. In all cases such themes should be filed with others in the loose-leaf note book.

Pupils ought now and then to exchange compositions and criticise, in writing, other work than their own, as the ability to detect errors has in some degree to be trained. The teacher

would do well to look over such criticisms to see that they are just, and not merely capricious or faultfinding.

The reading of themes in class is a common and excellent way of indicating defects and virtues in written work. Improved methods of expression ought, if possible, to be proposed by the boys and girls themselves. Various ways of putting the same thought can be worked out individually, at the board or on theme pads at the seats.

While the correcting and the revising of themes must inevitably be somewhat tedious tasks to teacher and pupils alike, an extremely large amount of both is absolutely necessary to the success of the composition course. It is easy for the most conscientious teacher to become negligent in the matter of correcting themes, as classes are usually large, and school duties burdensome; nevertheless, the careful instructor will remember at all times that the progress of her class will depend entirely upon her own vigilance and faithfulness in pointing out and correcting the various types of mistakes which are made by the pupils. Any degree of negligence is sure to produce its perceptible effect; but the converse is equally true: serious, persistent work is bound to show forth its results in the extermination of errors, and in the greater accuracy, skill, and power of the students. No teacher can afford, on any condition, to be less than faithful in the work of the minute examination and correction of themes.

It should be an established rule that themes be rewritten before being filed with the original themes, in the note book. The continuous and careful labor of the teacher should find a reflection in the work of the students, who should be trained to make every effort toward improving the quality of their written productions. If they are as interested as they should be, they will take pleasure in the attempt to better what they have done. They will enjoy noting the gain that comes from alteration of diction or arrangement, and will take pride in preserving in their filing books a clean copy of a piece of work which they have revised with the aid of the teacher's judicious correction and criticism. It is true that, in rare instances there is more to be gained by a new application of a principle than by a revision of a previous attempt. In such cases, the corrected theme may be partly rewritten at the board, during the recitation period, or merely the sections in which errors occur may

be written, in or out of class; practice may then be given in the use of the principle involved. Class work, done under pressure, is often the best that the pupil can do, and, as a rule, the effect of the drill is destroyed by the idea that the theme is to be written over again. Such work may at long intervals be filed unaltered, with a clear label showing that it is to serve as an exhibition of what the student is capable of doing unaided. However, the pupils should develop the habit of expecting to improve their regular work to the utmost, and should not be permitted to suppose that any other course is possible.

During the latter half of either year the students will be interested in working over and rewriting a few of the themes which they wrote in the first weeks of the course. Their ability to find and correct mistakes will be something of a test of the progress made during the time that has intervened between the first writing of the theme and its revision.

IX

GRAMMAR AND TECHNICALITIES

First and second year pupils are too immature for a complete and detailed study of the complexities of English grammar; such a minute consideration of the subject should be left for a semester's course in the junior or senior year. But the fact remains that there are many of the fundamental facts of grammar that can be readily grasped by the immature mind, and that can be made directly contributory to the excellence of the composition work.

The parts of speech have presumably been learned in the grades, but since an appalling ignorance of them will, nevertheless, be quite likely to appear somewhere in the class, a little time spent in studying them in the first high school year will by no means be lost. The primary elements of subject, predicate, and complement ought to be easily recognized by any freshman boy or girl. It will without doubt be necessary, however, to give a little very definite training in distinguishing between dependent and independent clauses. The matters of punctuation and sentence-structure depend so much upon an understanding of clauses that the freshmen should, early in the

year, be required to complete their knowledge of these very important elements. The differences between participles and infinitives should for the same reason be thoroughly understood. Rules of syntax must be known and applied, especially in the more elementary situations involving the case-forms of nouns and pronouns as subjects, objects, and predicate complements; agreement of verbs; and the connection of relatives with antecedents. The comparison-forms of adjectives may be given a passing glance. The principal parts of verbs commonly misused should receive particular attention; as *lie*, *lay*, *sit*, *set*, *do*, *go*, *see*, *dive*, *sing*, *drink*, *hang*, *draw*, and others of like importance. The simpler rules for the use of *shall* and *will* can be taught to good advantage.

The word "construction" used in its grammatical sense, should have a definite meaning to the students; in fact it is highly essential that the general nomenclature of grammar should be comprehended and used. Vague, roundabout terms, designed to avoid the use of technical words, are very sure to lead to wrong conception, and bungling methods of expression. Calling an idea by its right name in grammar is quite as necessary as calling a spade a spade in the study of agriculture.

A short review, in the second year, of the grammatical points covered in the first is advisable, some additions being made as occasion requires. Most of this work with grammar can be done incidentally, but now and then a day or two should be taken for thorough and careful study on the points which seem to be the least clearly understood by the class.

Punctuation is a matter which needs persistent and vigorous attention. Every effort should be made to teach the individuality of the sentence; to that end, the first crusade in the cause of punctuation should be directed against the egregious and intolerable "comma fault," the persistence of which in any pupil's writing ought to condemn the work incontinently, no matter what virtues it may possess. An error equally unforgivable is that which consists in punctuating and capitalizing subordinate elements, such as phrases and clauses, as if they were complete sentences. Mistakes like the two just mentioned, which can be made only by those persons who have no just appreciation of the characteristics of a sentence, should be treated with little lenience. Many students, whose work has perhaps not been subjected to sufficiently rigid revision in the

high school, are puzzled and incensed at finding that they have failed in the college entrance examination in English, through what seems to them a few trifling errors in the placing of periods and capitals. If pupils are to be saved the humiliation and inconvenience of such failure at the beginning of their college careers, they must be trained from the first of their high school work to be absolutely unerring in their recognition of the situations in which capitals and periods are essential. The students who do not go to college stand in still greater need of careful training, since the high school must give them a sufficient amount of instruction in English to last them through life.

The punctuation of restrictive and non-restrictive clauses is a subject which requires careful discrimination on the part of the student. Even freshmen may learn to distinguish between these two classes of clauses, and to insert or leave out the comma, as the sense demands. The use of commas for setting off appositives, vocatives, and parenthetical expressions ought to be easily learned. Exclamation points, question marks, and colons should cause little or no trouble. Though the finer distinctions in which the semicolon figures cannot be readily mastered, and should be left for later study, this punctuation mark can be used intelligently in compound sentences. An explanation of the value of the semicolon will often be of service in eradicating the comma blunder.

The use of quotation marks, and the indention of paragraphs in conversation, should be studied briefly but thoroughly in the first year, and reviewed in the second. The composition textbook will usually be a help in this work. After some preliminary training, an exercise in writing simple dialogue may be given in some such way as the following:

A boy comes hurrying home from school, and dashes into the sitting-room, where his mother is sewing. He throws his cap into a corner, his books upon the sofa, and begins to talk to his mother. Report the conversation which ensues.

Or: Two boys are walking along the street on a winter's day, when they see something shining in the snow. They both run to seize it, the larger getting possession of the object, which turns out to be a new silver dollar. Report the conversation.

The pupils' interest in the very life-like dialogues that will result will serve to atone for the dullness of the task of labor-

ing for good form. This sort of work should always precede that of writing the first long stories or, indeed, narratives of any kind.

Early in the first year, the subject of punctuation should be reviewed, and the more fundamental rules should be thoroughly learned, with the aid of dictation exercises, etc. Any laxity in the application of rules ought to be treated with summary severity. Little by little, as time goes on, the minor rules may be inculcated. At the end of the year, every freshman ought to be able to punctuate his written work intelligently and correctly. Those who cannot fulfil this requirement should be held for at least another half-year in the freshman composition class.

In its more elementary aspect, capitalization is a matter which presents few difficulties. In this subject as in that of signs and abbreviations, the better text-books are of much assistance.

The indention of paragraphs should be insisted upon from the first; and, if swift retribution always follows a failure to indent properly, the habit of giving paragraphs their due respect will soon be established.

Sentence-structure will, all through the course, receive more or less attention, especially in the second year. Occasionally, it will be well to devote one or two lessons to the study of the more forceful and pleasing ways of presenting a thought in a sentence. Short sentences may be combined into longer ones; long, loose, tangled sentences reconstructed by division, condensation, or rearrangement. The usual amateurish method of writing all sentences in the form of coördinate statements should, in the middle and latter half of the year, find at least a partial remedy in the practice given in subordinating independent clauses and sentences to those of, logically, more importance. The frequent study of a few paragraphs in the prose literature lessons for illustrations of good sentence-structure is very valuable.

Figures of speech, meters, stanza-forms and other merely rhetorical subjects deserve but slight attention in the first two years of the high school course. There is so much which is vastly more intelligible and useful, that these somewhat abstract forms ought to be left to the later years of the course.

It is unnecessary to emphasize the fact that the themes of

the class should be written in ink, on paper of uniform size and quality. There should be a set form of endorsing and filing all themes, which form should be rigidly adhered to. It is a small but useful bit of training to follow, day after day, an exact requirement in the handling of mechanical details. Carelessness in any form ought not to be tolerated. Blots and erasures should be considered a serious impairment of the excellence of a theme. This is perhaps a narrow view to take, but it seems a necessary one when dealing with pupils of the high school age. Good habits must be fixed, if possible, even at the sacrifice of a good deal of time and effort on the part of the students.

It is essential that the pupils be impressed with the necessity of legible and pleasing handwriting. While copper-plate regularity is not to be insisted upon, neatness, and a certain degree of uniformity, ought to be demanded. Pupils whose handwriting is notably bad should be shown that they are likely to be placed at a disadvantage in school work and business until their defects are remedied. If they can be made to realize this fact, and strive to render their handwriting attractive, they will be led to accomplish something for themselves that will be of material service to them in the future.

X

SPELLING

Most high schools have no definite time set apart for the study of spelling. It is therefore essential that in all classes a certain amount of attention should be given to the spelling of words that are in common use. In the composition class, a few words may be assigned nearly every day. They should be such as are misspelled in the written themes of the class, and such others as are a part of any educated person's vocabulary. If the list of words is put on the board before the recitation-hour, only a few minutes will be required for copying them; only a few moments more will be needed for reviewing the words assigned at the preceding recitation. The work should be quick and spirited, that no time may be wasted.

When any exercise is to be given for which the vocabulary may be fairly predicted, the words likely to be misspelled

should be made a part of several previous lessons. A great many errors are thus anticipated and prevented. In all literature work, the pupils should learn to spell the names of important persons and places that appear in the selection used. Before or during the drill in letter-writing, pupils should be taught the spelling of such words as *received, truly, respectfully, sincerely, recommendation, immediately, affectionately, hoping, writing, pleasure, convenience, accept, disappoint.*

A few rules, well learned and intelligently applied will be of some assistance in the matter of spelling.

The mere effort of remembering the word *Celia* will do away with any difficulty in spelling the following group of words: *receive, believe, deceive, relieve, conceive, perceive, receipt, belief, relief, deceit, conceit.* If *c* precedes the digraph, *e* follows the *c*, as in *Celia;* if *l* precedes the digraph, *i* follows the *l* as in *Celia.* No attempt should be made to apply this rule to any other words than those included in the group above given.

A few helpful rules are those which concern the adding of suffixes:

A monosyllable, or a word accented on the last syllable, if it ends in one consonant preceded by one vowel, doubles the final consonant when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added. Thus: *sit, sitting; regret, regretting; hop, hopped; occur, occurred.*

Words ending in silent *e* usually drop the *e* before a suffix beginning with a vowel. Thus: *stone, stony; shine, shining.* The following exception to this rule is to be noted: Words ending in *ce* or *ge* do not drop the *e* when *ous* or *able* is added. Thus: *peace, peaceable; change, changeable; courage, courageous.*

Verbs ending in *ie* change *ie* to *y* when *ing* is added. Thus: *tie, tying.*

Rules for noun plurals and possessives are to be found in any good grammar. It will probably be necessary to review them, although most high school pupils have had them reasonably well inculcated in the grades.

In any case, a rule is of no value, unless it is clearly understood and *accurately* learned. An occasional drill in the applying of rules should be given instead of the regular spelling work of the class.

It might be added here that the teacher should never (except for some very special reason) refuse to tell pupils how to spell words regarding which they are uncertain. It is true that,

even in an examination in literature or composition, a pupil "ought to know how" to spell every word that he uses; nevertheless, he probably does not, and the mere act of writing a word incorrectly doubles the difficulty of learning its correct form.

Every effort ought to be made in all classes, but particularly in composition, to do away with the poor spelling which is the shame of the high schools of today. The instructor in history should teach the spelling of such difficult words as are necessary for use in the study of history; the teacher of science should insist upon the correct spelling of scientific terms. While the department of English should be willing to do its full share, and more, all departments in the school should work together in a concerted attempt to produce in the students an ability to spell intelligently and accurately.

Pupils should, of course, be encouraged to use the dictionary freely, looking up the spelling of all words upon which they feel uncertain. Every student ought to own a dictionary printed in clear type—an Academic, or something equivalent. The small, cheap dictionary is a potent cause of poor eyesight among high school children, and its use should be discouraged wherever a better book can be substituted.

XI

WORD STUDY

Any great amount of word study, as such, is likely to have a deadening effect upon a class of young people. There are, nevertheless, many ways in which a teacher can develop in the pupil a feeling for good words, and a desire for an enlarged vocabulary. This can most profitably be done in a collateral way. The unfamiliar words in the literature lessons will at all times afford a basis for word study, and the composition work will give unlimited opportunity, as well.

Those pupils who are studying Latin will be pleased to see how an English word is related to the older language. Quite incidentally, striking derivations should be noted both in the literature and in the composition work, and root-words discussed. It will not be long until the students have acquired

a rudimentary habit of looking into a word to see what it is made of. They should frequently be asked, in connection with all their English lessons, to use the dictionary with a view to getting the etymology of words. This will be of especial value to those not studying Latin. Care must be exercised in the assignment of words; only those should be chosen in which the derivation is undisputed and reasonably apparent; such as: *subterranean*, *manuscript*, *benevolent*, *bovine*, *walrus*, *steward*.

Proper names sometimes form an interesting point of departure for the study of derivatives. In this connection, chapters XIV and XV of Johnson's *English Words* can be used to advantage.

A brief, but lively and picturesque, account of the development of the English language in connection with the history of the race will interest the children, and explain what may seem to them the unaccountable difficulties of our speech. The pupils should know the meaning of the term Anglo-Saxon, and something of the nature of Anglo-Saxon words. Chapters XIV and XXVII of Scott's *Ivanhoe* can be made useful in illustrating the antagonism between the Saxons and the Normans in the first few centuries following the Conquest. A theme might properly be made the focus of this study of the history of the English language.

A few common prefixes and suffixes, clearly understood and well learned, will be a distinct advantage to the pupils in all later word study. Most text-books furnish exercises of this type, yet it may not be inappropriate to append here a working list of prefixes and suffixes, to be taught in small numbers and at varying intervals.

Prefixes: *pre*, *pro*, *super*, *inter*, *sub*, *con*, *co*, *com*, *in*, *im*, *en*, *ex*, *e.* *de*, *dis*, *ad*, *a*, *re*, *ante*, *anti*, *post*, *infra*, *meta*, *medi*, *poly*, *mono*, *di*, *duo*, *tri*, *quadra*, (*i*) (*u*), *penta*, *sex*, *hex*, *sept*, *oct*, *non*, *deci*.

Suffixes: *er*, *or*, *ent*, *ant*, *ly*, *ous*, *ure*, *ness*, *hood*, *dom*, *ship*, *ism*, *ence*, *ance*, *tion*, *ing*, *ize*, *able*, *ible*, *al*, *ary*, *ory*, *ery*, *ive*, *ine*, *ed*, *ally*, *oid*, *ose*, *ization*, *ic*, *ment*, *ion*, *ity*, *fy*, *fication*, *ate*, *iform*, *age*, *like*, *less*, *ling*, *kin*, *ful*, *full*, *let*, *ology*, *y*, *ish*, *ist*, *ess*, *ster*, *stress*.

The ability to divide a word into its component parts is o great assistance in spelling. Many of the most formidable-looking words in the language are really easy to spell, if considered as combinations of etymological units.

The repetition of words in themes will inevitably become a topic for discussion. Synonyms and their values can thus be given a natural and profitable consideration. For example: A class was writing a theme in which the word "house" was found to be constantly repeated. They were asked to suggest synonyms for "house;" "building," "edifice," "construction," "mansion," "palace," "cottage," "hovel," "hut," "cabin," "residence," "home," "shelter," "dwelling," "abiding-place," "abode," were some of the words proposed and discussed. It was found that, while certain terms were decidedly unsuitable, others might be substituted for the noun so often repeated. The same idea may be constantly applied in theme-writing, and cannot fail to have a perceptibly beneficial effect on the vocabularies of young people with a scanty stock of words.

This study of synonyms can be particularly valuable by correlation with literature lessons. Noting, in the reading, the skillful way in which the author of a classic has avoided the clumsy repetition of a word will give the students an insight into the methods that are actually used for producing agreeable effects.

In the work of word study the following books are helpful: O. F. Emerson's *History of the English Language;* Greenough and Kittredge's *Words and their Ways;* Richard Grant White's *Every Day English,* and *Words and their Uses;* Jessie M. Anderson's *A Study of English Words;* R. C. Trench's *The Study of Words.*

XII

THE TEXT-BOOK AND THE NOTE BOOK

The Text-book

The text-book is the "guide, philosopher and friend" of the strong teacher, the evil genius of the inefficient one. It is safe to say that there never yet was a composition text-book sufficiently satisfactory to warrant its being used consecutively and *in toto.* Plodding page by page through a poor text-book is the most dismal labor imaginable, destructive, indeed, of all interest and value in composition work. While the better books furnish admirable material for both oral and written work,

something must usually be added and something left out. To adhere strictly to the order of exercises in any given text, no matter how good, is, under most circumstances, to squander time and energy. In all cases the course must be suited to the needs, capacities, and state of development of the class. The teacher should have a well-defined plan of her own, to which she can adapt her selection of exercises from the book. The more practicable material of the text, enlivened and supplemented by that which the ingenuity of the teacher is able to devise, will furnish the proper substance for a composition course.

Nevertheless, there is something to be said on the other side. The inexperienced teacher who feels herself puzzled, and undecided as to the plan and method to pursue, must depend rather largely upon the text-book until she has developed some originality and capability in working things out for herself. She should carefully study the text in its entirety, to find out its aims, its theory, and its scope, so that she may use it systematically and intelligently, making of it neither a haphazard nor a slavish use. Mere random selection for the sake of variety is unfair to the author, who should at least be given an opportunity to provide what substitute he may for the experience and resourcefulness which the teacher lacks.

In choosing a text-book, the teacher should seek one which can serve chiefly for purposes of references. It should not form the basis of any large amount of recitation work, nor need it supply the material for oral or written themes. It should contain, in concentrated form, the mechanical and rhetorical points which need consideration in a course in composition, and which can be presented to the class, by the teacher, only at the expense of a considerable amount of time. The text-book should furnish necessary information rather than the substance for expression.

A word in regard to the four-year texts now in vogue: In many respects they are unsatisfactory. They may, indeed, save the buying of an extra book or two during the high school course; but this advantage is offset by several real disadvantages. The books become grimy and unsightly from much handling; the boys and girls weary of the pictures, the exercises, the very covers of the volumes; the teachers of the first year or two select the best and most usable material, and leave

the rest for the later instructors to deal with as best they can. On the whole, it would seem wiser to have at least two books for the four-year course.

The Note-Book

There are two kinds of note-books which are valuable in composition: Those which are used for preserving the material presented by the teacher in class, and those which are used for filing the themes which the pupil has written. There is no reason why both these excellent purposes should not be served by one book, of the loose-leaf type, in which the pages which logically belong together can be grouped in orderly fashion.

It is most desirable that every pupil should keep, in good form, all directions and assignments given by the teacher, together with such necessary rules and principles of grammar and composition as do not appear in the text-book.

It is also essential that all the themes written by each pupil should be preserved in some orderly and accessible form, for the convenience not only of the teacher and the student but of the superintendent and inspectors as well.* Themes should be arranged in chronological order, in such a way as to show both the work originally handed in, and the revised form resulting from the teacher's corrections and the student's alterations. If the loose-leaf note book is used, the question of filing themes is easily disposed of, and quick reference can be made, by any one interested, to any point in the work which the class has covered. The loose-leaf note-book is, in fact, so great a convenience and so important a means of saving time and energy that it can scarcely be dispensed with in the composition class.

VIII

CORRELATION

In the first and second high school years, one-half of the time set apart for English should be given to composition. This arrangement does not mean that half of the week's work should

*See Bleyer, W. G., *The High School Course in English* (Revised edition), p. 19.

be arbitrarily, by hours and minutes, devoted to composition, and half to literature. The two studies ought to be mutually helpful, and such division of time should be made as seems to be productive of the best results in both.*

To some teachers, correlation means serving a literature lesson warmed over in the form of a theme. It is the reproduction of a story, partly in the pupil's own words, partly in those of the book. While such an exercise has its possibilities, and is not to be entirely despised, it possesses comparatively little value in developing the thinking power of a student. Then, too, the regular and detailed use of literature lessons as material for composition tends to render both studies distasteful. The human mind is so perversely constituted that the recognition of a constantly recurring and unyielding necessity produces a more or less unreasoning dislike for the task involved. If the pupil knows that every page of his literature lesson must at a certain time be reproduced in a theme, he is pretty certain to hate both his reading and his writing with fervid cordiality before the year is over.

Fortunately, the large majority of teachers use the literature work more wisely, in making it serve as a basis for composition in an indirect instead of a direct way. They assign, not the mere retelling of a part of a plot, but a subject that has a new touch of interest in it—a comparison of characters; an "imaginary portrait;" the enlarging of a description which is suggested in the book; a hypothetical adventure of a hero; or the brief discussion of some ethical point which has been raised in the reading. They occasionally, also, let a poem or a story make its own appeal, requiring no other discussion of it than the spontaneous oral comment that results from class-study. Thus no set relation is established between the literature and the composition work; so that whatever correlating is done does not possess the distasteful certainty surrounding the boarding-house table which presents the same unfailing bill of fare on every day of the week.

In the main, it seems best to draw upon the pupils' outside reading, and their actual observation and experience for the greater part of the theme work, depending upon the literature lessons for a different sort of assistance. This assistance comes

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*See *Ibid.*, 30, 37.

through the attempt to make the study of literature supplement and illustrate what is being done in composition, as has elsewhere been suggested in these pages. A vivid, striking bit of description may be noted, and analyzed with a view to discovering its technique. It may even be imitated by the class, if it is sufficiently distinctive. A clean-cut passage of explanation may serve as an object lesson in exposition. A discussion (not too minute) of the method employed in a narrative is of great help when the pupils are trying their hand at the difficult art of story-writing. Sentence-structure and paragraph-building may be studied to advantage in some particularly admirable selection.

The use of punctuation marks can, of course, be illustrated in any literature lesson. In prose, the indention of paragraphs, and, often, the mechanical details of a printed conversation will be exemplified. Grammar is illustrated at all times in its simpler and its more complicated aspects. Word study can be combined in an excellent way in composition and literature; the vocabulary acquired in reading ought to be made to promote success in writing. Many of the words in the daily spelling lessons can be taken from the literature which the class is studying.

However, all this illustrative work must be done with exceeding care, lest it give the impression that literature is only a mine for specimens, grammatical, philological, or otherwise. It should be done in an appreciative and inquiring way, as if one said, "The people who have written these poems and stories are great men and women. We have enjoyed what they have to say, and the style in which they have said it. Let us stop to see how they really produced their happy effects. Let us see if we can catch them at work, profiting, if we may, by their skill and ingenuity."

Such correlation should be made collateral and unobtrusive when it deals with a piece of literature which the class is engaged in studying. Taking the form of passing comment, it should not impede the progress of the actual literature work. When it becomes more elaborate and formal, as it may properly do for purposes of illustration and imitation, it ought preferably to be based upon some selection which the class has studied and laid aside. There exists, then, the desirable element of familiarity, but the technical examination of the piece does not de-

stroy the fine flavor of appreciation which ought to be impaired as little as may be while a classic is being read.

XIV

MISCELLANEOUS SUGGESTIONS

It is impossible to put too much emphasis on the necessity for definite and intelligible assignments. Every pupil in the class must know what he is expected to do; there must be no excuse for anyone's coming to class with his work unprepared. Clear directions tend to assure not only a prompt attention to required tasks, but also a willing and cheerful attitude in their performance. It is worth much to avoid the bewildered grumbling that is sure to circulate in a class to whom assignments are presented in a vague and hasty way. It will, therefore, profit the teacher to give out lessons, wherever possible, at the beginning of the recitation, when she has plenty of time, and to be almost wearisomely explicit in her explanation of what is to be done.

Putting clearly-worded assignments upon the blackboard, in a space especially allotted to them, is an excellent method, and one which saves a large amount of energy on the part of teacher and pupils.

In order that the composition work shall go smoothly and agreeably, some care is necessary in planning the week's program. One must be considerate of the pupils, and refrain from burdening them at times when they are under a nervous strain, or when they are already weighed down with heavy tasks. Plan to have the lighter and less strenuous pieces of work done at the time of tests and examinations in other studies. If possible, avoid setting the date of a laborious exercise, like the long theme, for the day on which the history or science notebooks are to be handed in. There is nothing to be gained by "piling on" work because some one else is doing so. The students will appreciate thoughtfulness in this regard, and will work the better for it. In order to prevent being imposed upon by pupils or other teachers, have an arrangement with the faculty by virtue of which you are privileged to make your work heavier on certain days of the week, the other instructors

reserving the remainder of the time for their heaviest requirements. In a small school, this plan can be carried out successfully, saving much general irritation, and some actual overexertion on the part of the more conscientious students.

When there is so much actual composition work to be done, there would seem to be little or no time for the learning of quotations from famous authors, and this work, it is true, may with propriety be left to the literature class. Yet if one corner of the blackboard in the recitation room be reserved for short selections, a spare moment now and then may be utilized for learning them. When the larger number of the class are at the board, and the others are for some reason enforcedly idle, the memorizing of a short quotation can be done by those at the seats without loss of time. Those who get through first in a written exercise are usually of the active type that is kept out of mischief by something to do. Let them learn a brief selection, and, turning away from it as it stands upon the board, attempt to write it out on a slip of paper, to be handed in. If the spirit in the class is the cheerful, eager one that it should be, the memorizing of quotations in this way will be considered, not a hardship, but a pleasure.

A class in which many of the members were perceptibly lacking in polish was given the following assignment, presented in such a way as to incur no suspicion of a personal application: A boy who lives far out in the country is coming to the city to attend school. He feels himself very ignorant of the rules of mannerly behavior, and has written to ask you about them. Write him in return, some simple and direct information as to how he should conduct himself at the table, on the street, and in the school room.

The discussion which followed this assignment was a means of reaching a number of boys who, coming from uncultivated homes, had literally never heard of some of the essentials of good manners. Even those who were better informed profited by having their attention called to matters which they were prone to disregard. Such an exercise must be carried out with some tact, lest it assume a frivolous or a priggish aspect, but it has a double value when it is successfully consummated.

It is well to keep a dated plan-book in which each day's lesson is briefly outlined, with added references to all pictures, books, or other illustrative material to be used. Individual assignments can be listed here, also, and a record kept of all requirements made upon the class or upon any of its members. The few moments that this work demands are saved over and over again in the ease with which any forgotten detail may be looked up. If the teacher keeps such a plan-book, she has before her in class an exact statement of what she wants to accomplish; and she is not likely, in the flutter incident to receiving visitors or correcting delinquent pupils, to omit important announcements, or mix the order of her recitation. When members of the class have been absent, the plan-book is an invaluable assistance in outlining work to be made up; when principal or inspector inquires concerning the amount of work covered within a given period, the plan-book supplements an unreliable memory. In preparing a review or an examination, a written record of the work which the class has done is almost indispensable. In laying out the course from week to week, the plan-book of the year before is extremely helpful, as it saves the repeated labor of looking up illustrative material and devising theme-subjects. On the whole, a running account of what the class is doing is a labor-saving device which the teacher can scarcely afford to ignore.

In connection with this plan, another for the benefit of the pupils, may be profitably used: A card-file, placed upon the teacher's desk in the class-room, is so arranged as to show, as the work proceeds, the lesson-assignment for each day of the term. At the end of each recitation, the teacher writes briefly upon a card, properly dated, the assignment for the next day, and places the card in the file. Any pupil who has been absent when a lesson is given out, has only to go to the desk, run through the file, and make a note of the work which he has missed.

The element of surprise may sometimes be used in the composition class without loss of dignity. After a long, dull stretch of work with forms and technicalities, when the forces of the class begin to flag, take a recitation period or a part of one, for some unexpected and interesting diversion, such as spelling down, telling stories, or reading aloud. There are many excel-

lent short stories quite suitable for the purpose of entertaining young people for a few minutes, and at the same time giving them a notion of good literature in its more sprightly form. *The Little Renault*, by Mary Hartwell Catherwood, never fails to create an interest, besides giving a vivid impression of the work of La Salle and Tonty in the Mississippi Valley.* *The Wreck of the Thomas Hyke*, by Frank R. Stockton is ingenious and amusing; the same may be said of *The Lady or the Tiger*. *Goliath* is a brief, humorous tale by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, while *For Bravery on the Field of Battle*, by the same author is more serious and thoughtful. An exquisite and most suitable little story is *The White Heron*, by Miss Jewett. *The Gold Bug*, and *The Purloined Letter*, by Poe, will arouse even the most lethargic boy or girl to animated attention, though both stories may, for oral reading, be condensed to some advantage. *The Sand Hill Stag*, by Ernest Thompson-Seton, may also be used, or Roberts' *Watchers of the Trail*, and *Watchers of the Campfire.*

Whatever effort the teacher may make to keep a spirit of good will in the class will be amply rewarded by the readiness with which assigned exercises are performed. Any attempt to preserve the course from monotony and wearisome rigidity is commendable in itself, even though it may not always appear to be directly in line with the inculcation of the principles of composition.

XV

SHORT-THEME SUBJECTS

(With some appended references to illustrative material.)

A View from a Height—*The Alhambra* (W. Irving), Maynard-Merrill Classics, pp. 50-54.
Twice Told Tales (N. Hawthorne), Lake Eng. Classics, pp. 230-232.

A Landscape—*A Marsh Island* (S. O. Jewett), pp. 66, 67.
Excursions (H. D. Thoreau), p. 436.

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*This story is bound with a much inferior story, *The Spirit of an Illinois Town* (not appropriate for class reading), which gives the name to the small volume in which *The Little Renault* appears.

The Maine Woods (H. D. Thoreau), pp. 129,130.
Fisherman's Luck (H. VanDyke), p. 17.
Across the Plains (R.L.Stevenson), ch.1, pp.40,41.
Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood (G. MacDonald), ch. 3, p. 31.

Winter Scenes—*Out Door Studies* (T. W. Higginson), ch. 7, pp. 164–176.

A Stream—*Mosses from an Old Manse* (N. Hawthornė), (The Old Manse).

An Island—*The Gold Bug* (E. A. Poe), MacMillan's Pocket Classics, p. 213.

A Ruin—*Ivanhoe* (W. Scott), Lake Eng. Classics, ch.16, pp.230, 231.

The Approach to a Building—*The Alhambra*, Maynard-Merrill Classics, p. 14.
The Sketch Book (W. Irving), (Selections), Ginn's Classics for Children p. 12.
Sketch Book, G. P. Putnam's Sons,p.365, (Stratford on Avon)
Ibid., pp. 378, 379.

A Building—*The Alhambra*, Maynard-Merrill Classics, p. 18.
The Sketch Book, Ginn's Classics for Children, pp. 42, 108.

A House—*The Country of the Pointed Firs* (S. O. Jewett), ch. 8, pp. 59, 60.

A Log House—*The Maine Woods*, p. 168.
Treasure Island, MacMillan's Pocket Classics ch. 19, pp. 115, 116.

The Settler's Cabin—*The Maine Woods*, pp. 28–30.

Farm Buildings—*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*: *The Sketch Book*, Ginn's Classics, p. 40.

A School House—*Ibid.*, p. 33.

A Room—*The Alhambra*, Maynard-Merrill Classics, p. 35.
Sketch Book, Ginn's Classics for Children, pp. 42, 43.
Ivanhoe, Lake Eng. Classics, ch. 3, pp. 70, 71.
Silas Marner (G. Eliot), Lake Eng. Classics, ch. 16, pp. 230, 231.

A Kitchen—*In the Valley* (H. Frederic), ch. 5, p. 51.

A Schoolroom—*David Copperfield* (C. Dickens), ch. 5, p. 92.

A Store—*The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains* (M. N. Murfree), ch. 2, pp. 40, 41.

A Meeting House—*Ibid.*, ch. 10, p. 178, 179.

A Living Room—*Ibid.*, ch. 3, p. 75.
Our Mutual Friend (C. Dickens), ch. 5.
The House of the Seven Gables (N. Hawthorne), Riverside Classics, ch. 2, p. 49.

The Best Room—*The Country of the Pointed Firs*, ch. 8, p. 62.
The Heart of Toil (Octave Thanet), p. 5.
Robert Falconer (G. MacDonald), ch. 2, p. 5.

A Street Scene—*A Christmas Carol* (C. Dickens), Lake Eng. Classics, Stave 3, p. 75.

A Grocer's Shop—*Ibid.*, Stave 3, pp. 76–78.

A Crowd—*Across the Plains* (R. L. Stevenson), ch. 1, pp. 3–6.

The Picnic—*The Country of the Pointed Firs* (S. O. Jewett), ch. 18, p. 172.

A Family Party—*The Sketch Book*, Ginn's Classics for Children, p. 110.
Twice Told Tales, Lake Eng. Classics, pp. 365, 366.
Silas Marner, Lake Eng. Classics, ch. 11, pp. 176–178.
A Christmas Carol, Stave 3, p. 85.

An Evening at Home—*Being a Boy* (C. D. Warner), ch. 12.
The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains (M. N. Murfree), ch. 13, pp. 236, 237.

Christmas Festivities—*The Sketch Book*, Ginn's Classics for Children, pp. 104–118.

A Person—*Ivanhoe*, Lake Eng. Classics, ch. 1, pp. 46, 47.
Ibid., ch. 2, pp. 53, 54.
Ibid., ch. 3, p. 72.
Ibid., ch. 4, pp. 80, 81, 85, 86.
Ibid., ch. 5, p. 91.
Ibid., ch. 7, p. 129.
Silas Marner (G. Eliot), Lake Eng. Classics, ch. 10, p. 145.
Ibid., ch. 11, p. 163.
The Fall of the House of Usher (E. A. Poe), MacMillan's Pocket Classics, pp. 8, 9.
Robinson Crusoe (D. Defoe), MacMillan's Pocket Classics, ch. 8, p. 85.
Ibid., ch. 10, p. 112.
Treasure Island, MacMillan's Pocket Classics, ch. 1, pp. 1, 2.

The Alhambra, Maynard-Merrill Classics, pp. 30, 31.
The Great Carbuncle (N. Hawthorne), Lake Eng. Classics, pp. 183–185.
The Sketch Book, Ginn's Classics, pp. 32, 50, 84, 89, 113.

A Traveller—*Twice Told Tales* (N. Hawthorne), Lake Eng. Classics, pp. 99, 100.

A Mysterious Stranger—*Treasure Island* (R. L. Stevenson), Canterbury Classics, ch. 15, pp. 125, 126.

A Woman—*Robert Falconer*, ch. 6, p. 38.
In the Valley, ch. 9, p. 92.
David Copperfield, ch. 13, p. 231.
The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains, ch. 1, p. 4.

A Man—*Our Mutual Friend* (C. Dickens), ch. 3, p. 1.
The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains, ch. 1, p. 3.
The House of the Seven Gables, Riverside Classics, ch. 4, p. 81.

Concerning Myself—*Sketch Book*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, pp. 15–19 (The Author's Account of Himself).

My Ancestors—*Autobiography* (B. Franklin), Gateway Texts, pp. 47–51.

A First Visit to the City—*Ibid.*, pp. 74, 75.

Taking a Journey—*Across the Plains*, ch. 1, pp. 19–20.
Sketch Book, Ginn's Classics for Children, pp. 1–9.

A Camp—*The Maine Woods* (H. D. Thoreau), p. 51.

In the Woods—*In the Wilderness* (C. D. Warner), pp. 9, 10 (*How I Killed a Bear*).

A Deer—*In the Wilderness*, pp. 66, 67 (*A-Hunting of the Deer*).

Camping Out—*In the Wilderness*, pp. 133–138.
Robinson Crusoe (D. Defoe), Macmillan's Pocket Classics, ch. 4, pp. 35, 36.

An Indian Camp—*The Silent Places* (S. E. White), ch. 6.
In the Valley (H. Frederic), ch. 5, pp. 48, 49.

Camp Cooking—*The Mountains* (S. E. White), ch. 14.

Going Hunting—*A Boy's Town* (W. D. Howells), ch. 13.
The Mountains, ch. 13.
Following the Deer (W. J. Long).

Lost in the Woods—*In the Wilderness*, pp. 21–40.

The Sugar Camp—*Being a Boy* (C. D. Warner), ch. 14.
The Circus—*Boy Life on the Prairie* (H. Garland), ch. 17.
Getting Ready for Church—*Being a Boy*, ch. 5.
My Pets—*A Boy's Town*, ch. 12.
How I Ran Away—*The Mill on the Floss* (G. Eliot), ch. 11.
The Schoolmaster—*Dombey and Son* (C. Dickens), ch. 11.
The Last Day of School—*Glengarry School Days* ("Ralph Connor"), ch. 13.
A Horseback Ride—*The Choir Invisible* (J. L. Allen), ch. 1.
Planting Corn—*Boy Life on the Prairie*, ch. 7.
Threshing Time—*Boy Life on the Prairie*, chs. 14, 16.
Main Travelled Roads (H. Garland), *A Branch Road.*
Fishing—*Being a Boy*, ch. 6.
Going for the Cows—*Being a Boy*, ch. 3.
A White Heron (S. O. Jewett).
A Garden—*The House of the Seven Gables* (N. Hawthorne), Riverside Classics, ch. 6, pp. 110, 111.
Elizabeth and Her German Garden, May 7, May 14.
Plants and Flowers—*Riverby* (J. Burroughs), pp. 1–32.
An Explanation of a Process—*Robinson Crusoe*, MacMillan's Pocket Classics, ch. 3, p. 29.
Ibid., ch. 7, pp. 64, 68, 69.
Incidents—*Riverby*, ch. 6, pp. 112–133.

Taking Mother's Place.
Flowers from Bulbs.
A Naughty Child.
Learning to Sew.
Collecting Postal Cards.
How not to Study.
Freshman and Sophomore.
The Seniors in Our School.
Market Square.
When Father Was a Boy.
The Railroad Engineer.
The Woods in Winter.
Waiting on the Table.
Morning Exercises at School.
The Noon Hour.
Making a Christmas Gift.
An Old Lady.
The Grocer's Window.
A Campfire at Night.
A Needless Fright.
The Delivery Boy.
Keeping Things in Their Places.
Bonfires.
Filling the Picnic Basket.
A Country School.
A Lumber Camp.
Partridge Hunting.
The Church Social.
An Indian.

An Intelligent Dog.
Answering the Telephone.
Our Literary Society.
A Camping Outfit.
Having Baby's Picture Taken.
Studying Under Difficulties.
My Window Garden.
The Sunday School Picnic.
My First Long Journey.
A Spelling Match.
Baking Day.
Cleaning House.
Getting Ready for the Party.
Getting Ready for School.
Sliding Down Hill.
Going for the Mail.
The Arrival of the Train.
A Chinese Laundry.
The Doctor.
Why Latin is Hard.
Afraid of the Dark.
My First Punishment.
The Candy Pull.
A Country Store.
An Automobile Ride.
A Childish Quarrel.
The Back Yard.
Speaking a Piece.
The Freight Train.
The Potato Diggers.
Harvest Time.
Making Butter.
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Watching the Robins.
How to Make a Book Rack.
How to Set the Table.
Table Manners.
How to Stencil a Table Cover.
Mending a Three-Cornered Tear.
How a Boy May Earn Money.
The Advertising Pages of a Magazine.
A Home-made Sled.
The Church Choir.
The Restaurant.
An Imaginary Portrait.
Why I Want to Finish My High School Course.
The Fire Company.
How to Improve our Streets.
A Millinery Store.
Why I Like the Town I Live in.
Filling the Wood Box.
The Duties of the Postman.
Who Makes the City Ordinances?
Should the Mayor be Paid?